

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3703

COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND FORESTS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 19, 2010

The Honorable Tom Tidwell
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-1111

Dear Chief Tidwell:

In the December 1, 2009 Federal Register, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) issued a proposed directive (RIN 0596-AC91) that would reduce the discount currently given to seniors and the disabled who hold special passes on campgrounds operated by private concessionaires. I write to you today to urge you not to implement this proposal, and to honor the promise that the Forest Service and other government agencies made to seniors and persons with disabilities when issuing these passes.

As you know, the proposed directive would reduce the current discount of 50% for seniors and persons with disabilities on privately operated camping fees on public land to 10%. When these passes were sold, they were with the understanding that they entitled their holder to lifetime benefits. This proposal would go back on that promise, effectively changing the rules after these passes had been sold. In the proposed regulations, USFS argues that the current discount is untenable because, among other reasons, there are a growing number of senior citizens in our country, thus reducing the revenue that concessionaires receive as more people take advantage of the discounts available. While I appreciate the potential need to change the types of passes and discounts offered in the future, USFS should not change the provisions of passes already issued.

I can see no reason for increasing the bottom lines of private companies with proceeds derived exclusively from persons with disabilities and elderly users of the National Forests. I urge you not to implement this proposal and instead to keep the promise the USFS has made to seniors and persons with disabilities.

I appreciate your consideration of my request and look forward to working with you in the future in my role as the Chairman of the Senate Public Lands and Forests Subcommittee.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator